

86 Airlift Wing

2013

Unit Designation

86th Airlift Wing

Higher Headquarters

Third Air Force

Commander

Brigadier General Patrick X. Mordente

Vice Commander

Colonel Leslie T. Smith Jr.

Assigned Units

86th Comptroller Squadron

86th Operations Group

37th Airlift Squadron

76th Airlift Squadron

86th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron

86th Operations Support Squadron

Detachment 2, Polygone

424th Air Base Squadron, Chievres,
Belgium (GSU)

496 Air Base Squadron, Moron Air Base,
Spain

86th Maintenance Group

86th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

86th Maintenance Squadron

86th Maintenance Operations Squadron

86th Civil Engineer Group

86th Civil Engineer Squadron

786th Civil Engineer Squadron

886th Civil Engineer Squadron

86th Mission Support Group

2nd Air Postal Squadron

86th Force Support Squadron
86th Mission Support Squadron
86th Security Forces Squadron
86th Communications Squadron
786th Force Support Squadron
569th United States Forces Police Squadron
700th Contracting Squadron
86th Logistics Readiness Group
86th Munitions Squadron
86th Logistics Readiness Squadron
86th Vehicle Readiness Squadron
86th Materiel Maintenance Squadron
86th Medical Group
86th Medical Squadron
86th Dental Squadron
86th Medical Operations Squadron
86th Medical Support Squadron
86th Aerospace Medicine Squadron

Station

Ramstein AFB, Germany

Aircraft Flown

C-130J Hercules, C-20H Gulfstream ,
C-21A Lear Jet, C-40, C-37

Emblem



Significance: The blue background symbolizes the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations, and the wedge shaped yellow pile signifies the sun, out of which the wing's airlift mission comes. The sharp point of the pile signifies the accuracy of the wings deliveries and the pile is also a stylized lightning bolt to show how rapidly the wing responds to any contingency.

Motto *Virtus Perdurat* (Enduring Courage)

Origins of the 86 Airlift Wing

The Little Airplane Years -- 1942-1992

The origins of the 86 Airlift Wing began on 13 January 1942, a little over a month after Pearl Harbor, when a rapidly expanding US Army Air Forces established the 86 Bombardment Group, Light (BG[L]). The 86 was activated on 10 February 1942 at Will

Rogers Field, Oklahoma, with a cadre of 5 officers and 163 enlisted men, and made several moves before settling at Key Field in Meridian, Mississippi, where it began training on A-20 and DB-7 *Havoc* aircraft.



Douglas A-20 *Havoc*

In September 1942 the 86 was redesignated a dive bomber unit and received A-24 *Dauntless* and A-31 *Vengeance* aircraft,

transferring its A-20s and DB-7s to the 27th and 47th Light Bomber Groups.



A-24 Dauntless



A-31 Vengeance

The new aircraft did not improve the 86's combat capability. Dive bombers had been found to be unsatisfactory for combat in the

European Theater after the initial days of the war and so the A-24, the Army Air Forces version of the US Navy's highly successful

SBD *Dauntless* and the A-31 were as replaced as rapidly as possible, starting on 20 November 1942 with the arrival of the first A-36s *Apache* (also christened the *Apache* or

Invader), the ground attack version of the P-51A *Mustang*, an aircraft that was one of the finest in the world at this time.



A-36 *Apache*

After training on their new mounts, in March 1943 the 86 and its three squadrons, the 309th, 310th, and 312th Bombardment Squadrons (Light), embarked from Staten Island on 29 April and sailed to Algeria, arriving at Mers El Khebir, a former French naval base at Oran, in May. Flying operations began 15 May from Mediouna airport, near Casablanca, French Morocco. A-36 aircraft in-theater training began 15 May. The 86 and its squadrons then began a series of moves around the theater which would eventually lead it to Sicily, Italy, Corsica, France and

Germany. The 309th Squadron flew the group's first combat mission on 2 July 1943 from Tafaroui Air Base, Algeria, and the group's other squadrons began combat operations on 6 July with attacks against Cap Bon, Tunis.

On 14 July, initial elements of the 86 embarked for Comiso airport, Sicily. The group settled into the airfield at Gela West, and entire group had arrived at Gela West by 21 July. The following day the group flew its first mission from that base, supporting the 1st Division of II Army Corps. By the time

the Germans withdrew from Sicily on 17 August, the group had flown 2,375 combat sorties in Sicily and along the southern coast of Italy.

The group was redesignated the 86 Fighter Bomber Group on 23 August 1943, and its squadrons, the 309th, 310th, and 312th Bombardment Squadrons (Light) redesignated the 525th, 526 and 527th Fighter-Bomber squadrons. On 27 August the newly redesignated group moved to Barcelona, Sicily and from here, the group provided air support for first Allied landings on the European mainland at Salerno, Italy. On 10 September 1943, three days after the invasion of Salerno, advance echelons of the 86 moved to Sele Airfield, near the beachhead. Enemy shelling of the beaches caused considerable difficulty during the move, and the group did not fly its first missions 15 September.

Following the fall of Naples, the group moved to Serretella Airfield and then to Pomigliano where it was to remain for some time. Throughout the winter and early of 1943-44, the 86 FBG supported Allied forces by attacking enemy lines of communication, troop concentrations and supply areas. Then, on 30 April 1944, the 86 moved to Marcianise Airfield to prepare for the spring offensive against the German Gustav Line. The 86 was an active participant in Operation *Strangle*,

the attempt to cut German supply lines prior to the Allied offensive striking rail and road networks, and attacking German troop and supply columns. While *Strangle* did not significantly cut into German supplies, it did cut down on the German's tactical mobility and was a major factor in the Allies eventual break through.

Higher headquarters recognized the outstanding work of the group with a Distinguished Unit Citation. After the Allies finally broke through the line at Cassino, Italy, the 86 flew a series of missions on 25 May 1944 to disrupt the enemy's strategic attempts to reform. The group's armed reconnaissance and bombing operations, ". . . in 12 missions and 86 sorties, destroyed 217 and damaged 245 enemy vehicles, inflicted an unknown number of casualties on hostile personnel, established many effective road blocks, silenced several gun positions, and interdicted the highways into the towns of Frosinone, Cori, and Cescano." The group suffered heavy losses -- two aircraft lost, six others heavily damaged, and one pilot killed.

During this period the 86 received P-40 *Warhawks* to augment its aging A-36s, but the obsolescent P-40s were only a stopgap measure. On 30 May 1944 the 86 received its final wartime designation, the 86 Fighter Group (FG), but more importantly the a few

weeks later, on 23 June, as the group welcomed its first P-47 *Thunderbolts*. The re-equipping with the tough, modern P-47 was welcomed by the group's pilots, as was their

move to Orbetello Airfield, on the west coast of Italy, between 18 and 30 June.



Flight of P-47 *Thunderbolts*

In mid-July, the 86 continued its tour of the coast by moved to Poretta Airfield, near Casamozza, on the island of Corsica, and from Poretta flew bombing missions against coastal defenses in direct support of Operation *Dragoon*, the Allied invasion of

southern France 15 August 1944. The Allied forces met little resistance as they moved inland twenty miles in the first twenty-four hours. The 86 attacked German on enemy road and rail networks in northern Italy and southern and, for the first time, flew regular

escort missions for heavy bombers. Once the invasion was completed, the 86 moved back on Italy and continued its coastal basing 23 September to Grosseto. The missions from this base were primarily armed reconnaissance road blocking, rail cutting and general attacks on the enemy in the Po Valley region.

In October, the weather turned bad, both limiting the group's combat flying and impeding its movement to a new base in Pisa. On 23 October the first echelon moved to Pisa while the main body remained at Grosseto, but severe floods at both places hampered the move. It was 6 November before the 86 FG finally completed the move to Pisa.

The group continued combat in northern Italy until February 1945, when it left the Mediterranean Theater and moved to Tantonville, France, in the Lorraine region, and operations shifted from targets in the Po Valley to targets in southern Germany. The Group's first mission to Germany – a cause of some excitement – was on 25 February 1945, and by March, most missions were to Germany against rail lines, roads, supply dumps, enemy installations and airfields. The 86 FG transferred from Tantonville to airstrip Y-72, Braunschardt (near Darmstadt), Germany, in April. A "maximum effort" on 20 April to stop all enemy transportation in

southern Germany earned the group its second Distinguished Unit Citation.

The 86 Fighter Group flew its final combat mission on 8 May 1945. By the end of that war, the group had flown a total of 28,662 combat sorties and claimed the destruction of 9,960 vehicles, 10,420 rail cars, 1,114 locomotives and 515 enemy aircraft.

After the war in Europe ended, the 86 remained at Braunschardt, which became a replacement depot to process troops returning to French staging areas for shipment home. Flying personnel performed routine training to maintain their proficiency. On 25-26 September 1945, the group moved to station R-25, Schweinfurt, Germany where began operations as a unit of the occupation force. The group's squadrons lost their personnel without replacement in October – November, and the group headquarters absorbed all remaining personnel on 24 November.

At midnight on 14 February 1946, the last of the group headquarters personnel were assigned to also Detachment A, 64th Fighter Wing. The designation of the group and squadrons moved, without personnel or equipment, to Bolling Field DC, to join Continental Air Forces (later, Strategic Air Command). However, Continental Air Forces had a surplus of units and on 31 March 1946, the 86 and its units were deactivated.

This deactivation was followed by a fast moving and often confusing set of events linked to America's realization that it was involved in a Cold War with the Soviet Union. Less than five months later, 20 Aug 1946, the US Army Air Forces activated the 86 Group and its three squadrons, 525th, 526 and 527th, at Nordholz Army Air Base, near Bremerhaven, Germany, with personnel and materiel, including P-47 fighters, from another deactivated unit, the 406 Fighter Group. The 86 was to serve as part of the occupation force and to maintain combat proficiency and on 14 November 1946, the group moved to Lechfeld Army Air Base, near Augsburg, Germany. However, Lechfeld was scheduled for closure, and in January 1947, the 86 FG became a "paper unit" when all of its P-47s and all but one officer and a few enlisted men transferred to other units.

On 15 May 1947, the "paper" group lost one fighter squadron, the 527th, but gained a reconnaissance squadron and moved to Furstenfeldbruck, Germany. The addition of a reconnaissance mission caused the group to be redesignated as the 86 Composite Group. The 86 then moved to Neubiberg Air Base,

near Munich, Germany on 12 June 1947 to replace the 33rd FG. On 25 June 1947, the 33rd FG became non-operational and the 86 Composite Group moved from paper unit to a "real" unit as it received personnel and P-47 *Thunderbolts* for its two squadrons. These were low time *Thunderbolts* taken from various storage depots in Germany. From 25 July to 25 August 1947, the group also exercised operational control over a P-51 *Mustang* squadron (later, Detachment A, 86 Composite Group).

The reconnaissance squadron's assignment to the group terminated on 25 January 1948 and the group assumed its former designation as the 86 Fighter Group. There were new designations in the works and the 86 Fighter Group became the tactical component of a new organization, the 86th Fighter Wing (FW) which was activated at Neubiberg on 1 July 1948, a week after the Soviets blocked the land routes to Berlin and the Berlin Airlift began. The mission of the 86 FW was to provide air defense for the Berlin Airlift cargo flights, in addition to general air defense of American Occupation Zone.

The 86 Joins the Jet Age

It was obvious that the piston engine F-47s would be no match for Soviet jet fighters, and on January 1950 the 86 Fighter Wing was informed that it would be re-equipped with F-84E *Thunderjets* and get a new mission, ground attack. On 20 January the wing was redesignated the 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing (FBW), and on October 1950

the 27th Fighter-Escort Wing, Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas ferried ninety-one F-84E "Thunderjets" to Neubiberg. The 86's old F-47s were distributed to other NATO countries.



The Last P-47



Republic F-84E *Thunderjet* of the 527th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 86 FBW

This 86's new name and mission continued as the wing prepared to move to a newly constructed base near Kaiserslautern, Germany – Ramstein-Landstuhl. Detachment 1, Headquarters 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing arrived at Landstuhl Air Base (AB) Germany under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Clyde M. Burwell arrived on 17 February 1952 and opened the facilities on what currently consists of the Ramstein flight line and facilities south of Kisling Memorial Drive. Landstuhl Air Base, the southernmost of the two bases, opened for operations on 5 August 1952, and the 86 Fighter Bomber

Wing arrived on 21 August 1952. On 23 March 1953, The Air Force used the 86 FBW for a “service test” reorganization and changed the wing's structure from four groups to two groups, one combat and one support. The purpose of the test was to determine the maximum efficiency obtainable with the minimum of personnel. In April 1953, the 86 FBW completed its move to Landstuhl and became the first unit in USAFE to fly the F-86F *Sabre Jet*. The F-86F had been very successful as both a fighter and fighter bomber in the Korean War, and marked a quantum increase in the Wing's capabilities.



F-86F *Sabre* of the 527 Fighter Bomber Squadron, 86 FBW (insignia at the top of the tail)

A year later the 86 was redesignated the 86 Fighter-Interceptor Wing (FIW) and assumed a new mission of air defense for the central European region. For this mission, the wing replaced its F-86Fs with rocket-armed F-86Ds which provided an all-weather capability.

On 27 July 1956, Headquarters, United States Air Force, approved the 86 FIW's

emblem, which remains the same one used by the 86 Airlift Wing today. The emblem was originally approved by the US Army Air Forces for the World War II-era 86 Bombardment Group (Dive) on 17 Oct 42, and the new emblem dropped the bomb from the center.



Picture of Emblems

On 1 December 1957, the two bases of Ramstein and Landstuhl were consolidated into a single entity known as Ramstein and Landstuhl Air Base, but common usage eventually shortened it to Ramstein Air Base.

During this period, the 86 FIW controlled as many as seven squadrons operating from

five different locations, and earned its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for October 1955 to October 1958. Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force moved from Wheelus AB, Libya to Ramstein on 15 November 1959, and that same year the 86 FIW wing converted F-102A *Delta Daggers* in 1959.



Soon afterwards, on 18 November 1960, the 86 was redesignated as the 86 Air Division (Defense). This change marked the beginning of a new era as the unit's organizational structure absorbed five aircraft

control and warning squadrons, including a small number of F-100 *Super Sabre* and F-104 *Starfighter* aircraft. At Ramstein, the 526 FIS was equipped with F-102s in 1960, while the 440th, 512th, 513th and 514th

Fuss began to retire their F-86's during November and December and were deactivated on 8 January 1961.

F-102 Squadrons assigned to the 86 AD at detached sites were:

32nd Fighter Interceptor Squadron,
Soesterberg AB, Netherlands

431st Fighter Interceptor Squadron,
Zaragoza AB, Spain

496 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Hahn
AB, West Germany

497th Fighter Interceptor Squadron,
Torrejon AB, Spain

525th Fighter Interceptor Squadron,
Bitburg AB, West Germany

526 Fighter Interceptor Squadron,
Ramstein AB, West Germany

However, at the time of their arrival in Europe, the F-102 was already being replaced by the McDonnell F-101B *Voodoo* and the Convair F-106 *Delta Dart* in the Aerospace Defense Command as interceptors, and by much more versatile McDonnell F-4 Phantom II. In USAFE, One of the 86 F-102 units, the 497th FIS, transitioned to F-4Cs in 1963, was redesignated 497th Tactical Fighter Squadron and transferred to George AFB, California.

The 86 AD continued to fly an air defense mission using its separate fighter interceptor squadrons while simultaneously

providing control of the airways through efforts of the various aircraft control and warning units. In recognition how well it accomplished its myriad missions and for implementing the single 412L Air Weapons Control System the Air Force purchased, the 86 received a second Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period July 1964 to June 1965.

In 1966, the 86 AD soon faced more changes. President DeGaulle declared that France was withdrawing from NATO. Far-reaching changes occurred, including a major reorganization in 1967 when France withdrew from the NATO military command structure, forcing all foreign troops to leave. This mandated a reorganization that resulted in the 26 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and its RF-4C aircraft and the 26 Combat Support Group (CSG) coming to Ramstein taking over as the new base operating unit. The 86 AD returned to its previous designation as the 86 FIW, then was deactivated on 14 November 1968, leaving the 26 TRW as Ramstein's principal operating unit with the 517th and 526 Tactical Fighter Squadrons and the 26th 38th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons. However, shortly after this realignment, the Canadian Armed Forces reorganized and downsized

their forces in Europe, and the Canadian 3 Wing left Zweibrucken Air Base. Since Zweibrucken was now open, on 1 November 1969, the Air Force reactivated the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) at the base. Puzzlingly, the new designation did not coincide with the wing's mission as its forces at Zweibrucken consisted of a single tactical reconnaissance squadron of RF-4s, which was joined by a second recon squadron in 1971. The name issue was resolved as part of a USAFE command-wide effort to realign functions and streamline operations called *Creek Action*. Then, in what was called “unusual ceremony,” on 31 January 1973, the commander of the 26 TRW, Brigadier General William Georgi, traded his 26 TRW flag for the flag of the 86 TFW, and became commander of the 86 TFW. The 26 TRW and 38th TRS moved to Zweibrucken AB.

The name of the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing was transferred back to Ramstein, and its fighter squadron, the 526th, was soon joined by the 512th Tactical Fighter Squadron returning to its old home. Both squadrons flew the F-4E *Phantom II* which was to serve the 86 longer than any other aircraft in its history.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Ramstein began to gain hardened aircraft shelters as part of the Theater Air Base Vulnerability (TABV, pronounced “Tab-Vee”) program, and on 27 Jun 1969 the base accepted six newly-constructed aircraft shelters as part of the TABV program. These shelters, which provided a high level of protection from a variety of types of attack, were the first of 342 TABV shelters to be built in Central Europe.



F-4Es of the 86 TFW

On 31 Jan 1973, the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) returned to Ramstein and the 26 TRW moved to Zweibrücken. The 86

CSG accepted responsibility for base operations.

The First Terrorist Attacks

On 31 August 1981 a terrorist bomb hidden in a parked vehicle exploded between B and C wings of Ramstein's building 201 (Headquarters USAFE and Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Central Europe). The bomb caused sixteen

casualties and heavy damage to both areas, which forced their evacuation pending renovation. In April 1986, the bombing of *La Belle* disco in Berlin brought 35 casualties to the hospital at Landstuhl.

The Arrival of the F-16

As the wing approached its fortieth year of service in Germany, on 20 Sep 1985 the first F-16C *Fighting Falcon* arrived, and the 86 TFW began conversion away from the F-4E\ to the highly sophisticated F-16C/D *Fighting Falcon*. With the arrival of four

Block 30 F-16Cs on 7 October 1986, the 86 TFW became the first operational unit to receive this latest variation of the *Fighting Falcon*. On 7 July 1986, the last F-4E departed Ramstein.



Changing of the Guard: the F-4E (top) to the F-16C (bottom), 1986

Disaster Strikes

Flying military aircraft has inherent dangers, and Ramstein was reminded of that fact when, during Ramstein's annual *Flugtag* open house and air show on 31 Aug 1988, three Italian demonstration aircraft collided in mid-air while performing the intricate "Pierced Heart" maneuver. While quick reactions from emergency response forces minimized collateral damage, but

disaster resulted from flaming debris and aircraft parts which careened into the assembled crowd. The result was a total of 70 fatalities, 4 Americans and 66 foreign nationals, and with over 500 injuries. Over 200 casualties were taken to the hospital at Landstuhl within ten minutes, saving many lives.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the End of the Cold War

The members of the 89th. Along with the rest of the world, watched the Communist Bloc countries of Eastern Europe with fascination as the events of the

late 1989 unfolded. When the Berlin Wall began to come down on November 9, 1989 and the celebrations began, members of the wing went to Berlin to see the events and to,

in many cases, take pieces of the Wall. Many of large slabs of concrete were placed outside USAFE headquarters. By the beginning of 1990, it seemed that the Cold

War was on its last legs, and questions began to arise about the future of US forces in Europe. These questions were soon answered by events in the Middle East.



Berlin Wall Remnant behind USAFE Headquarters

Desert Shield/Desert Storm

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War was in sight but the 86 and Ramstein had just begin to absorb this when, in August 1990, the Iraqis invaded

Kuwait. Under Operation *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, much to the dismay of the wing personnel, the F-16s of the 86 wing did not deploy to the Persian Gulf like so

many of its USAFE counterparts. Ramstein became an intermediate support base for American forces deployed to the Persian Gulf. On 10 August 1990, Ramstein began receiving MAC stage crews as the base became an overflow airfield for Rhein-Main AB supporting strategic airlift traffic to the Persian Gulf. In addition to serving as a central overflow hub for airlift traffic flying between the US and the Arabian Peninsula, Ramstein also established an intermediate engine repair facility for deployed F-16s, became a huge collection and distribution center for gulf-bound munitions, and on 15 Jan 1991 Ramstein AB's aeromedical staging facility activated a 150-bed hospital and blood transshipment center in Hangar 1. The hospital provided triage to its first patients from the Persian Gulf on the same day. Additionally, personnel from virtually every squadron subordinate to the 316 Air Division augmented Air Force and Army units deployed to the gulf.

In August 1990, a Military Airlift Command C-5 assigned to MAC's 60th Military Airlift Wing crashed in an open field outside open field outside the airfield perimeter just seconds after taking off from Ramstein's westbound runway. The C-5, loaded with medical supplies, dry rations and 180,000 pounds of fuel, had been bound

for the Persian Gulf. Only four of the seventeen crewmembers and duty passengers survived.

Following *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, the 86 TFW and its two fighter squadrons began flying combat air patrol and armed reconnaissance missions over northern Iraq in support of Operation *Provide Comfort*. From 6 April 1991, when the operation began, until September 1993 when its commitment ended, the wing flew nearly 5,000 sorties over Iraq. For its participation in *Provide Comfort*, the 86 TFW received credit in a Joint Meritorious Unit Award, though the award did little to placate the wing personnel who felt they had "missed" the war.

On 1 May 1991, the 86 TFW was redesignated 86 Fighter Wing (FW) and underwent a complete change in its organizational structure as a test base for the USAFE *Corona South* wing reorganization program, an effort to "flatten" command lines and consolidate span of control. Ramstein's 316 Air Division AD and 377th Combat Support Wing was inactivated and all of their former functions placed under the operational control of the 86 Fighter Wing. The lessons learned at Ramstein applied to other units Air Force-wide as they converted to this new organizational structure.

Combat Success

On 17 August 1993, the 86 received its first LANTIRN-capable Block 40 F-16C which eventually replaced the earlier Block 30 F-16s. One month later, the 86 began flying combat air patrol and close air support missions over Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation *Deny Flight*. Under *Deny Flight*, Serbian aircraft were forbidden to fly over Bosnian territory, and many of the 86 F-16s deployed to Aviano AB, Italy to enforce the restrictions. On 28 February 1994, the 86 salved some of its frustrations from missing *Desert Storm* when two F-16Cs from the 86's 526 Tactical Fighter Squadron on patrol when directed to intercept six Serbian Soko G-4 *Super Galebs* detected bombing targets in the town of Bugojno, Bosnia-Herzegovina by a USAF E-3 Sentry. The *Galebs* were warned twice to land or leave the UN no-fly zone, but both warnings were ignored and the two F-16s were vectored in to intercept the *Galebs*. Two more warnings were given, and the F-16Cs were given clearance to fire. F-16C 89-2137 flown by Capt. Robert Wright fired a single AIM-120 AMRAAM which dispatched the lead *Galeb*, and then fired two Sidewinders which destroyed two more

Galebs. The second F-16C flown by Capt. Scott O'Grady fired a Sidewinder at the fourth aircraft, but this missile missed. A second flight of F-16Cs was vectored in by the AWACS, and the lead aircraft from this flight (89-2009) destroyed a fourth *Galeb* near Banja-Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The remaining two *Galebs* managed to escape Bosnian airspace via Croatia. This was the first offensive action ever performed by NATO warplanes. While the F-16s were supporting *Deny Flight*, the end of the Cold War was bringing major force structure changes. The decision was made to change the 86 Wing from a fighter wing to a wing devoted to intra-theater airlift, and for the 86 Wing to assume the C-130 airlift mission previously held by the 435th Airlift Wing at Rhein Main Air Base, Germany, which was slated for inactivation. With the influx of C-130 personnel, the wing's F-16s gradually dispersed from Ramstein and many went, Italy to continue *Deny Flight* missions. On 21 Jul 1994 the 86 Wing held a "Fighter Farewell" ceremony for the departure of its last F-16s, most to the 31 FW at Aviano AB, and the 86 Wing became the 86 Airlift Wing.



A G-4 Super Galeb

The Birth of the 86 Airlift Wing

Since its founding in 1942, the 86 Wing designation had been associated with tactical fighters, fighter-bombers, and interceptors; but as mentioned the end of the Cold War brought major force structure changes throughout the Air Force, and the 86 Wing was no exception. On 1 June 1992, the 86 Fighter Wing which had been only F-16s, began a slow move to airlift operations when the wing took over the 58th Airlift Squadron (AS) and its small executive fleet of C-12, C-20 *Gulfstream*, C-21 *Lear Jet*, CT-43, C-135, and UH-1 aircraft. After gaining this airlift mission, the wing changed its designation from the 86 Fighter Wing to the 86 Wing.



C-12 Huron



C-20 Gulfstream



C-21 Lear Jet

On 1 July 1993 Detachment 1, 435 Ops Gp, at Chieveres, Belgium was redesignated as the Det 1, 86th Ops Gp, bringing a C 9 into the 86th inventory, as well as responsibility to provide direct airlift support to SACEUR. After gaining this airlift mission, the wing changed its designation from the 86 Fighter Wing to the 86 Wing.

On 1 July 1993, the 86 also added an aeromedical evacuation mission. The Second Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES) and the 55 Aeromedical Airlift Squadron (AAS) were transferred from Rhein-Main to Ramstein. The 55 added another aircraft type, the C-9A *Nightingale*, to the 86 Wing inventory.

Shortly after its move, on 1 October 1993, the 55 AAS was inactivated and

became the 75 Airlift Squadron and the 58 AS was inactivated and became the 76 Airlift Squadron as the Air Force was attempting to sustain the lineage of its oldest units in an ever-decreasing force. To complete the shuffle, the Second Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron inactivated on 16 August 1994 and renamed the 86 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, but with Second AES' personnel, funds and equipment.



C-9 Nightingale

The Shift to Airlift

At this time the Air Force made the decision to change the 86 Wing from a F-16 fighter wing to a wing devoted to intra-theater airlift that would assume the C-130 airlift mission held by the 435 Airlift Wing (AW) at Rhein Main Air Base, Germany, which was slated for inactivation as part of the Rhein Main Transition Plan as Rhein Main closed.



37 AS C-130E

To start the flow of C-130 personnel to the 86, the 435 AW sent approximately 200 personnel from the 37 Airlift Squadron (AS) as a Detachment to Ramstein on 7 March 1994. This small detachment began planning and administrative activities and served as a central point for incoming personnel and equipment transferring to Ramstein. On 28 June 1994, the first two C-130E *Hercules*

aircraft to be permanently stationed at Ramstein arrived. Gradually more C-130Es and personnel arrived, until finally the 37 Airlift Squadron had a total of 19 C-130Es and approximately 1,100 personnel.

Concurrently with the arrivals of the C-130s and their personnel, the 86 Wing's F-16s dispersed from Ramstein. On 21 July 1994 the 86 Wing held a "Fighter Farewell" ceremony for the departure of its last F-16s to the 31 Fighter Wing at Aviano Air Base, Italy.



On 1 October 1994 the final transition took place when the 37th Airlift Squadron "Blue Tail Flies" officially transferred to the 86 Wing and the wing officially became the 86 Airlift Wing with the 37 AS, 75 AS, 76 AS, and the 86 AES as its tactical units.

The New Mission

The new 86 Airlift Wing was responsible for United States Air Forces, Europe (USAFE) intra-theater airlift throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East, as well as for supporting operations and exercises throughout the European theater. The reoriented wing's successful transition from F-16s to C-130s and its airlift support of numerous European contingencies earned it the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 July 1993-30 June 1995, bringing the wing's total Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards to six.

During the transition to an airlift wing the 86 also inherited an ongoing airlift mission in support of Operation *Provide Promise*. The operation began on 9 January 1992 and ended on 9 January 1996. The 37th AS, which had flown its first sortie in Sarajevo on 3 July 1992, flew the bulk of the airlift provided by the United States during the operation. Beginning in 14 January 1995 the 37 AS began flying its *Provide Promise* missions from Falconara AB, Ancona, Italy.

The first real test for the 86 AW and Ramstein AB as the USAFE center of intra-theater airlift operations began during the latter half of 1995. From 29 August to 21 September, the 76 AS deployed a total of 2 C-21 aircraft and 12 personnel to Naples, Italy

to support Operation Deliberate Force. The deployed aircraft flew over 30 missions from Naples while another eight missions originated from Ramstein AB. In December 1995 the 86 AW participated in Operation *Joint Endeavor*, which saw the deployment of US and allied peacekeeping forces to Bosnia. While the operations were highly successful, the operation was marred when, on 3 Apr 1996, the 86 AW's sole CT-43 crashed near Dubrovnik, Croatia, claiming the lives of 35 people, including the Secretary of Commerce Ronald H. Brown, who had been on a mission to improve the economy and infrastructure of the former Yugoslavia.



Wreckage of Secretary Brown's CT-43

Joint Endeavor concluded 20 December 1996, and US forces became a part of the new NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina known as Operation *Joint Guard*. On 20 June 1998 *Joint Guard* ended and the Stabilization Force transitioned to a slightly smaller follow-on

force, and was renamed Operation *Joint Forge*. The 86 AW, with augmentation support from active duty, Air National Guard and Reserve units from the United States, successfully sustained this effort by delivering US Army and Air Force peacekeeping forces and the equipment into the area. By 31 December 2000, the 86 AW and its supporting units had transported over 48,000 tons of cargo and 111,164 personnel into, around and out of the theater of operations.

In April 1996 Civil disturbances broke out in the Republic of Liberia. As the violence escalated the US Embassy in Monrovia requested a Noncombatant Evacuation Order for approximately 270 American Citizens and 470 third country nationals in the area of the capital. On 9 April HQ USAFE tasked the 86 AW to provide a deployment contingent in support of the NEO. This Operation was dubbed ASSURED RESPONSE. The wing set up a crisis action team to direct the deployment effort. Eight aeromedical personnel and two C-130s with 50 personnel deployed to Dakar, Senegal. During the two week operation, C-130 aircrews flew 30 missions and evacuated 625 Americans and foreign nationals.



US Citizens Awaiting Evacuation from Liberia during *Assured Response*

From February to March 1997, the wing executed Operation *Assured Lift* with five C-130s and 147 personnel delivering peacekeepers of the Economic Community of West African to Liberia. In March 1997, the wing's Contingency Operations Flight supported another NEO, Operation *Silver Wake*, this time in the Balkan state of Albania. The 86 AW personnel oversaw 62 missions by CH-46s, CH-47s and CH-53s moving 1,550 evacuees. For its support of *Joint Guard* and *Assured Lift*, along with numerous other contingencies during the period 1 Jul 96 - 30 Jun 97, the 86 AW received its seventh Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

During 1997 and 1998, the 86 AW supported continued operations in the Persian Gulf Region, Operations *Northern Watch* and *Southern Watch*, as well as *Phoenix Scorpion I-IV*, the deployment of

forces as a show of force to compel Iraq to comply with UN weapons inspectors. The *Phoenix Scorpion* deployments provided the means for later coercive air strikes against Iraq. From 1998 through 2000, 86 AW personnel supported Operation *Provide Hope*, the delivery of excess medical supplies to the Republic of Moldova in the former Soviet Union.



86 AW Personnel Supporting *Provide Hope*

In 1999 the former Republic of Yugoslavia sought to reclaim the region of Kosovo, and this led to a period of “ethnic cleansing.” When Yugoslavia failed to

comply with provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1199 and continued its ethnic cleansing operations NATO, led by the United States, began Operation *Allied Force*. *Allied Force* focused on bombing key Yugoslavia targets in an effort to persuade the President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia to comply with UN resolutions. In support of *Allied Force*, the 86 AW flew 396 missions carrying 3,000 tons of cargo and 1,492 passengers to various destinations within the European theater.

Upon the conclusion of *Allied Force* the 86 AW began Operation *Joint Guardian*, the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo to establish a secure environment for the return of the refugees, and executed the first combat airdrop into Kosovo, Operation *Rapid Guardian*, flying seven sorties for and dropping approximately 130 US Army Paratroopers.



37 AS C-130E drooping US Army paratroopers during Operation *Rapid Guardian*

The Founding of the 86 Contingency Response Group

The new security environment in the Balkans showed the USAF the need for a rapid-deployment "first-in" force to secure a contingency airfield, then establish and maintain airfield and aerial port operations and provide force protection. In response to this need, the Air Force activated its first Contingency Response Group (CRG), the 86 CRG, on 26 February 1999, as part of the 86 AW. The 86 CRG had two subordinate units -- the 86 Air Mobility Squadron and 786 Security Forces Squadron -- and incorporated more than 30 different jobs.

This new, self-contained unit became the Air Force standard for such units, and proved its utility during the Kosovo conflict.



CRG "Opening the Base" Operations

Other Operations

From 24 March to 14 July 1999, the 86 AW participated in Operation *Shining Hope*, a mission of humanitarian support for refugees displaced by the conflict in the Balkans with shelter and food. This new operation was based at Tirane, Albania.

The 86 AW provided support in different ways – the 37th AS for example provided airlift to forward deployed units of the 86th and other organizations. The 37th and its augmenting forces flew 323 missions; airlifted 4,950,980 pounds of cargo and 2,080 passengers to Tirane (5 April -30 June 99).

On 5 May 1999, US President William Clinton, accompanied by Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Secretary of Defense

William Cohen, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Henry Shelton and a large assortment of congressional delegates visited the 86 AW and Ramstein AB. During his visit the President confirmed the 86 AW's informal motto, "The Worlds Greatest Airlift Wing."

In early December 1999, the Air Force announced that the 86 AW commander, Brigadier General Michael Wooley, who had commanded the 86 AW since July 1998, would become commander of the Tanker Airlift Control Center at AMC headquarters, Scott AFB, Ill. General Wooley was replaced by Brigadier General Mark Volcheff. As the year 2000 approached, the 89th and the KMC devoted much attention to the dreaded Y2K bug, but there were no disruptions on the base.

The New Millennium

On 1 January 2000, the Air Force introduced the concept of *Air Expeditionary Forces*, quickly known as AEFs, to respond to the increasing number of contingencies that call for worldwide deployments and to balance the burdens (and opportunities) for such deployments. The AEF concept

attempted to provide some measure of "predictability, " by putting airmen either on call for deployment or actually deployed for 90 days every 15 months. The concept was intended to let all personnel know the dates of their 90-day deployment period well in advance so they could be prepared. The

remaining 12 months of the 15 month AEF cycle was to be spent performing routine activities: training, participating in exercises, working on civilian or military education and spending time with their families.

The Balkans and Africa were the much of the operational focus of the 86 AW in 2000. From March through April 2000, the 86 AW sent seven 37th AS C-130s and crews Hoedspruit Airfield, Limpopo, South Africa in support of Joint Task Force *Atlas Response*, a relief effort in southern Mozambique and South Africa following torrential rains and flooding. The 37th flew over 170 sorties transporting over 600,000 pounds of cargo and 1,096 passengers.



37 AS C-130E Supporting Humanitarian Operations

During *Atlas Response*, a new capability was provided by a 37th AS C-130E, serial number 68-0938, the first USAF C-130 to undergo *Keen Sage* camera system modification. The *Keen Sage* system was mounted in a metal-encased sphere, slightly

larger than a basketball, housing three sophisticated video capture lenses -- a daylight television, a 955mm fixed focal length zoom and infrared in six fields -- mounted on a pallet and strapped down in the cargo hold of the Hercules. Controlled by two operators in the aircraft, the lenses scan full circle and along 90 degrees of elevation and the airborne camera operators can beam live analog video and digitally-captured still images back to a ground station, where it could be recorded and sent to relief organizations and other users. *Atlas Response* was the first operational deployment of a C-130 with the *Keen Sage* camera system, and the 37th C-130 flew 39 sorties using this new capability to search for displaced refugees so they could be provided humanitarian assistance. Eventually the wing received eight *Keen Sage* configured aircraft.

At the same time, members of the 86 Medical Group deployed to the nation of Cameroon for exercise MEDFLAG/*Brilliant Lion*. 120 doctors and medical technicians administered 20,000 immunizations and performed over 70 surgeries, as well as delivering and distributing over 50,000 pounds of medical supplies. In August 2001, the 86 Contingency Response Group deployed to Africa as part of Operation *Focus Relief*, the movement and support of UN-

mandated peace keeping operations in Sierra Leone.

Beginning on 17 August 2000, the 86 Wing moved a large contingent of American soldiers to a staging base in Skopje, Macedonia, then on to Kosovo as part of NATO's *Immediate Ready Force*. By 31 December 2000 the 86 AW, with support from deployed C-130 units, transported 5,000 tons of cargo and 30,604 personnel to support US forces in Kosovo.

In addition to the wing's "on call" status to support any European crisis, the wing positioned aircraft and medical personnel at

emergency landing fields in Spain, Morocco and Banjul for every National Air and Space Administration (NASA) Space Shuttle launch, as well as flying missions for the On-Site Inspection Agency as part of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

May 2000 was a banner month for the 86. Air Force Chief of Staff General Mike Ryan presented the 86 Airlift Wing with the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon for its actions from 1 September 1997, to 31 August 1999. Additionally, the 86's C-130 squadron, the 37th Airlift Squadron "Bluetail Flies," won the 2000 USAFE Best Airlift Tanker Squadron award.

The Foreshadowing of the Global War on Terror

On 25 June 1996, a terrorist bomb that devastated the Khobar Towers complex within Saudi Arabia. In response to the Khobar Towers bombing, the 86 AW deployed 30 aeromedical personnel that assisted in evacuating 59 casualties. At the time, the bombing was considered a random act of terrorism. Little did the personnel of the wing know that this bomb that foreshadowed a war against in shadowy enemy, the global terrorist.

On 7 August 1998, terrorist bombs damaged the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar Es-Salaam, Tanzania. Over 200 persons lost their lives with 4,000 injured as a result of the blast. The 86th sent 51 personnel to support the airlift portion, Determined Response of the Joint Task Force Resolute Response. The 86 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, with C-141 support, evacuated US victims to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

During DETERMINED RESPONSE the 76th Airlift Squadron provided operational support /airlift support for Secretary of State Madeline Albright as she quickly returned to the US between 7-8 August to conduct high level discussions of the bombings. The personnel of the 75 AS also provided 100 life preservers and assisted in the launching of two AMC C-141s used to shuttle the wounded back to Ramstein Air Base (AB).

Aboard the aircraft members of the 86 AES joined Landstuhl's Critical Care Air Transport Team. These individuals help triage the injured and provided in-flight patient care for ten Americans and twelve Kenyans seriously injured in the bombing. The 86 AES also assisted in providing litter support to and from the C-141 for further evaluation and care at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and for transport to state-side hospitals. On 11 August 1998 the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC) held a ceremony to honor the 11 fallen American comrades, among them AF, SMSgt Sherry Lynn Olds, age 40 from Panama City Florida, and AF Civilian, Arlene Kirk, age 50 from South Bend, Indiana.

Then, a little over two years later, on 12 October 2000, the US Navy destroyer *USS Cole* was refueling at the port at Aden, Yemen, when a terrorist small boat pulled close and detonated a bomb. The bomb opened a 40 by 40 foot hole on its port side, killing 17 sailors and wounding 40 others. The Wing's 86 AES and 75th AS evacuated the 28 injured sailors (9 litter and 19 ambulatory) from Yemen to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for immediate life saving medical care. Both squadrons were recognized for their meritorious mission. The NAA, National Aeronautics Association, chose squadrons to share the Mackay Trophy For performing heroic rescue efforts in record time for victims of the USS Cole tragedy during the 6,000 mile round-trip journey between Aden, Yemen; Djibouti, Africa and Ramstein, Germany. Aircrew members responded brilliantly and launched two rescue C-9 crews within one hour of alert.



The Mackay Trophy

The winners were

E10E1 Mission
 LtCol Marlon Nailling
 Maj John Andrus
 Maj Kathryn Drake
 Maj David Sellars
 Capt Richard Hunt
 Capt Kevin Keith
 Capt Karey Dufour
 Capt Karin Petersen
 Capt Donna Fournier
 1Lt Lucas Jobe
 SSgt Edward Franceschina
 SSgt Heather Robertson
 SSgt Bradley Atherton
 SSgt Ryan Reller

SrA Chad Schusko
 SSgt Brian Hoffmeyer
 E10E2 Mission
 Col Byron Hepburn
 LtCol Linda Torrens
 Maj Jonas Allman
 Maj. Thomas Jenkins
 Maj Lola Casby
 Maj Jeffrey Davis
 Capt Raymond Chehy
 Capt Natalie Sykes
 Capt Michael Smith
 Capt Tim Carter
 1Lt Jennifer Bagozzi
 SSgt Alan Wooldridge
 SSgt Kelly Pollard
 SSgt Trent Arnold
 SSgt Juan Garza
 SrA Anna Duffner
 Critical Care Air Transport Team
 Col David Welling, USAF
 Maj Stephan A. Alkins, USA
 Capt Raymond M. Nudo, USAF
 Capt Andrew J. Reynolds, USAF
 Capt Bernd T. Wegner, USAF
 SSgt Chyrise M. Jenkins, USAF
 SSgt Christopher E. Whited, USAF



On 11 September 2001, the world shifted with the terrorist attacks on the twin

towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon.

The 86 AW's New Mission: The Global War on Terror

The 86 AW and the KMC was stunned by the 11 September attacks, and there was an outpouring of sympathy from the German community. Ramstein Air Base and other KMC installations went to a high state of alert and a number of establishments were put off limits to reduce the possibility of further terrorist incidents. While there were no immediate new taskings for the 86 AW, it

was clear that America would be striking back and the 86 AW would be an important part of the effort.

The first military response to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States was assigned the name Operation *Enduring Freedom* and commenced on Oct. 7, 2001. *Enduring Freedom* aimed at the destruction of terrorist

training camps and infrastructure within Afghanistan, the capture of al Qaeda leaders, and the cessation of terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

The military response was ratcheted up further when, on 16 October 2002, President Bush signed the newly passed Congressional Resolution for the “Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq,” beginning Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.

As soon as this occurred, the 86 Medical Group initiated planning for a 150-bed expansion of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) and initiated the initial steps to prepare building 2117 (Ramstein’s South Side Fitness Center) for contingency use as an Aeromedical Staging Facility. Beginning the day after the president’s announcement, the 86 Maintenance Group and the 86 Logistics Readiness Squadron Traffic Management Office configured the 3.4 million pounds in just 120 hours, an operation that normally took 30 days, and began moving munitions for deployment. In November 2002, 29 members of the 86 Civil Engineering Group were deployed to Ganci Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, to prepare for possible operations in Iraq.

In December, the tempo increased further. A request was sent from the

Southern European Task Force requesting the 86 CRG evaluate eight airfields in northern Iraq. On 27 December members of the Youngstown, Ohio 757th Airlift Reserve Squadron, 910th Airlift Wing, arrived to join the Selfridge, Michigan Air National Guard’s 165th Airlift Squadron, 127 AW, as part of the 86 Airlift Wing’s 38th Airlift Squadron (Provisional). With the new arrivals, the combined forces of the 38th (P) Squadron was 154 personnel and four C-130 aircraft, and the unit took primarily responsibility for providing airlift for forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina supporting Operation *Joint Forge*.

The high operations tempo continued in 2003. On 3 January the 86 Materiel Maintenance Squadron (MMS) began moving War Readiness Materiel (WRM) for deployment. Over the next eight months, the 86 MMS shipped 8,340 tons of WRM to 13 locations in 9 countries, by August every USAFE location that supported Operation *Iraqi Freedom* and Operation *Enduring Freedom* had received WRM from the 86 MMS. The 86 MMS also deployed seven members to various contingency locations to include Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan, and Bagram, Afghanistan.

Beginning 14 February, the 37th Airlift Squadron began using its *Keen Sage* equipped C-130s to conduct observation missions over Iraq in preparation for possible action. The squadron flew a total of 14 missions, most at night, covering 5 to 15 targets per flight. To honor this rather “un-airlift” operation, the crews gave themselves the name of the “37th Airlift Reconnaissance Squadron.”

From 11 Mar 2003, the 86 AW’s 38th Airlift Squadron (Provisional) Squadron, operating from Constanta, Romania, flew its first Operation *Iraqi Freedom* mission. Initially 38th (P) Squadron flew missions with just 4 aircraft, but even as these missions began help was on the way. On 3 March, the 757th Airlift Reserve Squadron, 910th Airlift Wing, Youngstown, Ohio, and

the 165th Airlift Squadron, 123rd Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, Louisville, Kentucky, were called to active duty for one year to join 38th (P) Squadron. The units arrived from 21-27 March, and the personnel and equipment increased 38th (P) Squadron from four C-130s and 154 personnel to ten C-130s and 306 personnel.

On 17 March, President Bush delivered an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein that he and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Saddam refused. On 20 March, the 86 Contingency Response Group went through the 86 Airlift Wing Deployment Control Center, Personnel Deployment Function, and Vehicle Deployment Function in less than three hours—a record time.

Fight’s On...

On 20 March the Coalition’s began its air assault on Baghdad, and Coalition Forces began the invasion of Iraq. The 86 AW’s effort began on March 27, 2003, when 20 members of the 86 Expeditionary Contingency Response Group, departed from Aviano Air Base, Italy and parachuted into Bashur airfield in northern Iraq, to prepare the

field for airlift operations. The 86 ECRG team parachuted into Bashur with 1000 “sky soldiers” of the 173rd Airborne Brigade on the largest airborne combat insertion since 1989 Operation *Just Cause* in Panama. The initial cadre was followed by 200 more members from the 86 ECRG and the 86 Expeditionary Air Mobility Squadron.

Another 86 AW unit, the 37th Airlift Squadron with its C-130E *Hercules*, was soon involved flying into the airfield, the first *Hercules* landing at 1400 on 7 April 2003. Processing through as many as five mobility lines at once, 593 members of the 86 AW deployed to Operation *Iraqi Freedom* by 7 April. US casualties were evacuated to Ramstein, often by 86 AW units, the 75th Airlift Squadron and the 86 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. By August 2003 the 86 AW units had flown more than 30 medical evacuation missions back to Ramstein where, once on the ground, critical care transport teams provided acute care and managed patient transfer to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

The 86's 37th Airlift Squadron aircraft had also begun deliveries to the forward base in Constanta, Romania on 6 April. In the ensuing week the squadron delivered 57 tons and 58 passengers to Constanta in just seven missions. Over the subsequent weeks, the squadron's nineteen crews continued to fly round the clock missions averaging 4.5 missions per day. On 14 April, the 38th (P) began to fly Stage Operations from Souda Bay, Crete. Their first mission into Iraq brought US Marines into Erbil in an effort to seal off the Iraq-Syrian boarder. A few days later, 17 April, the Bashur Airfield the 86

CRG had secured opened and the first shipment of humanitarian aid arrived at destined for residents near Kirkuk, Iraq, and during the 27 days of operation of this airfield the 86 Expeditionary Air Mobility Squadron received more than 370 fixed wing arrivals and departures, 4,200 personnel, and 21,500,000 pounds of cargo. By 22 April the last aircraft transited Bashur Airfield and four days later, on 26 April, the 86 Contingency Response Group Commander, Col Steven Weart, notified higher headquarters, that Bashur Field, Iraq was now closed for air traffic. This was a unique situation since the the 86 CRG normally turned its bases over for further operations. This marked the first time the 86 CRG closed a base that it had opened.

On 3 May 2003 the 37th Airlift Squadron and 38th Squadron (P) established Constanta, Romania, Stage Operations. Flying from Constanta to Kirkuk, Iraq, the 38th Airlift Squadron (P) flew its first mission on 3 May and its last mission on 24 May, the last time the unit would fly into Iraq in support of *Iraqi Freedom*. On 10 July 2003 38th (P) Squadron flew its last Operation *Iraqi Freedom* support mission.

Not all of the 86 activity in 2003 was combat related. In the spring, a C-130E from the 37th AS flew to Moscow with other

aircraft from USAF to participate in the Sixth Annual Moscow Air Show. They were the first US military aircraft ever to participate in an air show in Russia. Beginning in 30 August, four of the 75th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron's C-9A *Nightingales* were sent to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, also known as the "bone yard." On 27 September

2003, the last C-9A of the unit was retired but was sent to the Reserves. On 1 October the 75th was deactivated and its personnel was absorbed into the other units of the 86 Operations Group. To help replace the C-9As, four C-21A *Learjets* were modified to accommodate a portable medical pallet called *Spectrum* to allow the aircraft to perform the medical evacuation mission.

2004: A Major Reorganization

At the beginning of 2004 the 86 Airlift Wing was the largest wing in the Air Force, but its sheer size raised various management issues. On 15 January 2004, as part of an arrangement arrived at in 2003 to increase organizational efficiency based on a pattern used by several units in the states, the 86 AW was split into three wings. The 86 AW became Ramstein Air Base's operational arm with the 86 Operations Group, the 86 Maintenance Group, 86 Air and Space Communications Group, and 86 Contingency Response Group. The support function was taken over by the 435th Air Base Wing, which became the overall host base unit at Ramstein, with mission support, security forces, communications, civil engineering, logistics readiness and medical

groups. Another third wing, the 38th Combat Support Wing, commanded support and geographically separated units.

While supporting the Global War on Terrorism in the Middle East and East Asia, much of the 86 AW's focus was on Africa, which was in the US European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility. On 28 February 2004, C-130s from the 37th AS joined a humanitarian effort to bring supplies to Al Hoceima Province in northern Morocco. On 13 March 2004, in a "rush delivery," two C-130s from the 37th AS delivered more than 19 tons of humanitarian aid to Chad. The mission, which under normal circumstances would have taken several days to plan, was planned and the aircraft launched in less than an hour. On 6

June 2004, three 37th AS C-130s participated in a parachute drop with 13 other USAF airlifters to commemorate the 60th anniversary of D-Day.

During a two week operation in March 2004 the 37th AS and the 86 Contingency Support Group moved 252 tons of cargo and 357 US Army soldiers into Tibuktu, Mali, in support of the Global War on Terrorism. In August 2004, the 86 AW increased its support of the Global War on Terrorism as wing personnel began to deploy as part of the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) “downrange,” the euphuism for the Persian Gulf region or the areas in and around Afghanistan. Most of the Ramstein airmen, especially aircrew, were deployed to Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, where they served as part of the 386 Air Expeditionary Wing. Many of their combat missions were flown into Bagdad International Airport and Balad Air Base, both in Iraq.

In October 2004, two C-130s from the 37th AS deployed to Kigali, Rwanda, near the Darfur region of Sudan, to provide support and security to the United Nations agencies and non-government organizations in the region. During the deployment the crews transported 380 African Union troops and 3,000 tons of supplies. To close out the year, Ramstein C-130s supported the International

Security Assistance force, the NATO rebuilding of Afghanistan.

On 23 February 2005 President George Bush visited Ramstein as part of a “fence mending” trip with European leaders, as Ramstein personnel continued to support Global War on Terrorism operations in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf in the Air Expeditionary Force. At the time over 1100 Ramstein personnel were either deployed, on the way to their deployment, or just returning from a deployment.

In July 2005, the 86 AW deployed three C-130s from the 37th AS and about 40 personnel to Kigali, Rwanda, in support of NATO missions in Darfur, then in October returned many of the African Union troops to Rwanda. The deployment was similar to one undertaken in October 2004, and during the operation the C-130s carried the African Union troops on a thirteen hour flight to Sudan where the African Union troops were to provide security for aid distribution operations in the area.

In August 2005, aircrew and maintainers from the 37th AS and the 86 Maintenance Squadron began to train members of the newly reconstituted Iraqi Air Force to fly the C-130 *Hercules*. The Iraqis new C-130 squadron was dubbed 23 Squadron and, in late August, 23 Squadron

completed its first mission, airlifting Iraqi troops into a combat operation. Another benchmark for 23 Squadron was flying the Iraqi leaders from around the country to the capital for Iraqi's first democratic election and the creation of the Iraqi constitution. By February 2006, 23 Squadron was flying two missions each day to help the busy U.S. C-130 squadrons, and not only were the flying missions successful, but also the Iraqi maintainers, trained by 86 personnel, were able to maintain the aircraft on their own. By July 2006, 23 Squadron was fully operational and the 37th AS personnel returned to Ramstein.

On 10 October 2005, Rhein-Main Air Base was officially deactivated and Ramstein Air Base now designated "The Gateway to Europe." Another bit of good news for Ramstein came on 9 December when, to the delight of about 3,000 soccer fans partying Kaiserslautern's *Stiftsplatz*, it was announced that the US national soccer teams would play its first rounds games in the FIFA World Cup in Kaiserslautern. It was quickly decided that the US team would be quartered at Ramstein Air Base.

2006: Ramstein "Best in the Air Force"

4 April 2006, was a big day for Ramstein and the 86 AW. Brigadier General Rob Kane, 86 Airlift Wing and Kaiserslautern Military Community commander, announced that Ramstein won the 2006 Air Force Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence. That same day, the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Inspector General announced the 86 AW earned an overall rating of "Excellent" for its first Operational Readiness Inspection in nine years.

On 7 April, the 86 Airlift Wing changed command as Brigadier General Kane turned over command to Colonel Richard Johnston. Less than a month later, on 5 May, Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Kenneth J. Krieg presented Ramstein Air Base with the 2006 Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence during a ceremony at the Pentagon. Team Ramstein was led by Colonel Richard Johnston, the 86 Airlift Wing and KMC commander, and

accompanied by about 30 Ramstein members from all ranks, including a civilian and a NATO representative. The group was welcomed to Washington 3 May with an Air Force ceremony and office call with Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Michael W. Wynne, and senior leaders including General T. Michael Moseley, Air Force Chief of Staff and Major General Mark Anderson, the head of the installation excellence inspection team.

The 86 AW was also commended by USAFE for its actions from January 15, 2004 to October 31, 2005, as it led European Command's theater airlift force in fighting and sustaining the Global War on Terrorism. The 86 AW flew over 14,000 sorties, delivered 43,521 passengers and 36,000 tons of cargo, supported 7 major operations and 15 deployments in 30 countries as well as continuing operations in the Balkans, flying 465 combat sorties supporting Operations *Joint Forge* and *Joint Guardian*. Additionally, the wing supported Operation *African Movement* in Sudan, with 10 total deployed aircraft moving 1,821 Rwandan peacekeeping forces and 150,000 pounds of equipment to stabilize the strife-torn Darfur region. The 86 AW also supported Central Command Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* with a "steady state"

deployment. The wing flew over 3,000 combat sorties, delivering 29,744 warfighters and 4,868 tons of cargo to the frontline, while also treating over 1,300 combat wounded at contingency aeromedical staging facilities.

In July 2006, the 86 CRG participated in the evacuation of American citizens from Lebanon when the Israelis launched an incursion into southern Lebanon and large scale fighting resulted. Not only did the 86 CRG aid the evacuation, but by the end of July Ramstein had also served as a collection and departure point for over 1800 of the evacuees who were returning to the US.

In July 2006, the 37th AW also received two additional C-130Es from Yokota Air Base in Japan, bringing Ramstein's total number to 17. In another acquisition, the 86AW acquired a single C-40B previously operated by the 89AW at Andrews AFB to replace the C-9A *Nightingale* which was retired in 2005. The C-40B, 01-0040, is configured as an airborne command post and is not used on medical evacuation missions, unlike the C-9A that it replaced.

On October 10, Colonel Rich Johnston, KMC and 86Airlift Wing commander was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General.

As the year ended, the 37 AS was tasked to increase the number of C-130Es it deployed “downrange” from two to four. Something that had serious ramifications given the aging C-130E fleet.

The first half of 2007 posed maintenance challenges for the 86 AW. With four deployed C-130Es and the number of C-130s in the depot the number of C-130s the wing had available for flying was severely limited. Indeed, most of the wings actual missions for higher headquarters were flown by the 38 (P) Delta squadron. However, towards the end of

the year an influx of C-130Es from other units, the return of many aircraft from depot maintenance, and the cut of the number of crews and aircraft meant that the 86 AW was once more flying a full load of missions.

During part of the year the runway was also closed at Chievres, Belgium, the home of the 309 AS, which supported SACEUR. During this time the unit had to fly from Cherloi, Belgium. Another OSA aircraft, the C-20, was deployed for the first time “downrange” and had a very successful tour.



76 AS/86 AW C-20H Deployed Crew

On 2 February; the 86 CRG sent a team to Chad, Africa to help USAID with ongoing humanitarian operations.

While the 86 AW participated in numerous events in 2007, one of the most touching was a flight by one of the 38 (P) Delta Squadron's C-130s to Tripoli, Libya, which had once been home to a major American air base, Wheelus. When the United States was forced to leave, it left behind in a cemetery the remains of 72 dependents, all still born babies or infants. With the improving atmosphere between the governments of Libya and the United States, the 86 AW was told to proceed to the Libyan capitol, Tripoli, and recover the remains. A team led by General Johnston flew to Libya

on 1 March 2007 to recover the remains, and they were returned to Ramstein to be returned to their families.

Much of the wing's activities in 2007 focused on Theater Security Cooperation, where 86 AW Airmen worked with friendly nations to exchange information and prepare to work together in the future, as well as Off Station Training.

One of the major focuses of the Theater Security Cooperation was on the Ukraine as the 86 AW established a "sister unit" relationship with the 25th Guards Regiment flying the Il-76 transport.

From January 31- February 3, members of the Ukrainian Air Force visited Ramstein and the 86 AW, hosted by the 86 AW



Ukrainian Air Force 25th Guards Regiment Il-76

commander, General Johnston. From 13-16 February an 86 AW team went to Melitopol Air Base, the home of the 25th Guards, for a site survey for a follow on visit by the 37 AS. The visit was followed by another visit from 12-14 November led by General Johnston to formally establish the “sister unit” relationship and the assist the Ukrainian Air Force as they became the official component of the Joint Rapid Reaction Force.

Russia was another area where Theater Security Cooperation Events took place. From 13-27 August, a C-130 from the 37 AS took part in the Moscow Air Show at Ramenskoye, Russia, the fourth largest in the world and in December a delegation from the Russian Air Force visited the 86 AW.

On August 2, the 37 AS supported airdrop operations by dropping Bosnian paratroopers near Banja Lake, Bosnia, an event that was viewed by the Bosnian president and the Chief of Bosnian General Staff.

During 2007 the wing added the 496ABS, Moron AB, Spain to the 86 OG and the 38CST to the 86 CRG, where it became the 86 CST. The 496 ABS was to prove especially challenging, since it was on a Spanish Eurofighter base and had a relatively small (approximately 96 personnel) US contingent and relatively

little in the way of support structure. The 86 CST mainly consisted of local nationals, but there was soon a move to add a larger American contingent so it could perform operations outside of Germany.

The wing also began slowly to look forward to replacing its old C-130Es with new C-130 Js, scheduled for April 2009.

Aircraft noise continued to be a major issue with the surrounding community. General Johnston, like General Kane before him, took a very active role in discussing the issues with the local mayors and the local communities to make sure they understood what the base was doing to keep noise under control within the boundaries of mission accomplishment.

The reorganization of 2005, when the 435 ABW and 86 AW split, was partially undone, at the end of 2007 when the position of Installation Commander was assigned to the 435 ABW/CC, Colonel Earl Matthews. In December 2007 General Johnston turned over command to Colonel William Bender, and with the departure of General Johnston and the assumption of command by Colonel Bender the KMC Commander position was turned over, on a temporary basis, to the 435 ABW/CC. There were no physical movements associated with these changes,

and permanent changes were to be made in 2008 by the USAFE/CC.

In 2008, the wing experienced both triumph and loss. On August 11, Russia began an invasion of its neighboring country Georgia. The 86 AW had Airman from both the CRG and ACOMG on the ground in Georgia, and soon the 37 AS C-130Es began to fly humanitarian aid into the country while many of the 86 AW Airmen remained in place and performed their duties. Then, on September 22, tragedy. Major Rodolfo "Rod" Rodriguez was killed by a truck bomb in Islamabad, Pakistan, outside the Marriott Hotel. Rodriguez, a 34-year-old Air Force Academy and commander of the

Contingency Training Flight, 86th Construction and Training Squadron became the first Ramstein Airman to die in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and the first Ramstein Airman to die in combat since World War II.

At the beginning of 2008, the increased numbers of C-130s available made it possible for the wing to resume flying HHQ directed missions around the USAFE AOR and the wing began to fly a 24/7 schedule. At the same time, the arrival of the C-130Js drew closer and the wing put on a full scale planning push and began construction on C-130J infrastructure.

2009 A year of Great Achievements

By 2008 it had become clear that the reorganization of 2003 had not yielded the kind of efficient organizational structure that had been hoped for. In 2008 restructuring was in the works. Under the 2008 plan the command was streamlined into a single command chain to a single airfield authority with a flying wing focused on flight line operations. The wing organizational structure and mission also changed in 2009 when the 435th Air Base Wing was redesignated as the 435th Air Ground

Operations Wing, and the 431st Air Base Group was inactivated. The 435 AGOW assumed mission areas performed by elements of the 86th, while mission areas previously performed by the 435 ABW were assigned to the 86th Airlift Wing. The 86th, one of the largest wings in the Air Force, became the host wing for Ramstein Air Base.

Another great achievement in 2009 was the retirement of C-130E aircraft and the transition, beginning in April, to the bigger,

faster, and stronger C-130J Super Hercules in the 86 AW. The end of the C-130E at Ramstein came to an end on 2 November 2009 when Tail No. 72-1299 left for its new home at Powdiz Air Base in Poland. On 19 December the first C-130J Super Hercules mission was flown. On that day Maj. Robert May of the 37th Airlift Squadron, and his crew were flew into Mali to bring home 17 troops who had been assisting with training Malian forces.

The changes taking place in 2009 greatly enhanced the ability of the 86th AW to continue to provide theater airlift support for U.S. European Command and U.S. African Command missions, aeromedical evacuation support, airlifting wounded warriors back to the United States, and operational support airlift through distinguished visitor support



C-130J Super Hercules

2010 witnessed a good deal of activity. The 86th played a role in Operation *ENDURING FREEDOM* supporting the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The 86 AW also continued with partnership building in places such as Bulgaria,

Rumania, and Poland. From 4 to 7 December, Two C-130J Super Hercules aircraft assigned to the 37th Airlift Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, delivered 65 tons of fire retardant to Israel. This was a part of a joint U.S. European Command and U.S. Air Forces in Europe effort to assist the

Israeli government deal with what was considered the worst wildfire since the country's founding in 1948.

Humanitarian missions continued in 2011. From 26 February to 16 C130Js of the 37 AS flew 28 sorties transporting 628 refugees and 46.4 tons of cargo in Tunisia and Egypt. From 19 to 23 March the 37th Airlift Squadron participated in Operation *ODYSSEY DAWN* to protect the Libyan

people from Moammar Gadhafi's regime. The squadron successfully completed 22 missions, logging 149 flight hrs during which it moved 278 cargo tons and 450 passengers.

2011 was marred by yet another tragedy that occurred on 2 March when a member of the 86 AW family, A1C Zachary Cuddeback, was killed by a terrorist at Frankfurt International Airport.



Airmen load cargo into a C-130J Super Hercules for its departure in support of Joint Task Force *ODYSSEY DAWN* in March 2011

On September 24 the citizens of Schopp unveiled a memorial in honor of 1stLt Salvatore Meli who had sacrificed his life in order to save the town from a catastrophe on 14 November 1956 when he successfully maneuvered his stricken F-86 jet away from the town, crashing on the outskirts of the Community of Schopp instead.



Ceremony honoring Lt. Meli in Schopp

On 29 October, the AW supported international humanitarian relief efforts in Libya at the request of the Department of State and by direction of the Secretary of Defense, USAFRICOM. The 86 AW transported four wounded Libyans for treatment in medical facilities in Europe and 28 to the United States.



Airmen from the 86th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and a Critical Care Air Transport Team from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center unload wounded Libyan fighters from a C-130J Hercules.

The Operational tempo of the 86 AW continued unabated in 2012 as it supported AFCENT, EUROCOM and AFRCIOM missions. The first quarter of the year was also marked by recognition for the achievements of the 86 AW or its subordinate elements. On 2 March Rhineland-Pfalz, at a ceremony on base, attended by numerous dignitaries, Minister President Kurt Beck presented a streamer to Brigadier General

Hyde commemorating the Wing's 60 years of service in Rhineland-Pfalz.



Rhineland-Pfalz Minister President Kurt Beck and Brigadier General Charles K. Hyde, 86 AW commander, placing streamer commemorating 60 years of service on Wing Guide-on

On 31 March the Ramstein Chapel Ministry Team was selected as the winner of the Charles I. Carpenter Award as the best large chapel program in the Air Force. Later in September the 86 AW was once again called upon to spring into action in Libya. This time, though, it involved the dignified transfer of the remains of US State Department Personnel who had been killed in Benghazi. The remains brought to Ramstein on 12 September and flown to Andrews Air Force Base on 14 September.

On 5 October 2012 The 309th Airlift Squadron was inactivated and the 424th Air Base Squadron was activated at Chievres Air Base Belgium.

History of Ramstein Air Force Base

On 20 March 1945, the 319th Infantry Regiment of the US 80th Division captured the town of Kaiserslautern without resistance. American bombers had pounded the city repeatedly. The heaviest raids occurred on 7 January, 11 August and 28 September 1944, with the rail yard and main roads as the primary targets. More than sixty percent of the city was destroyed by allied bombers and, of the 20,000 homes located throughout the city, 11,000 were damaged or destroyed by war's end (the cemetery wall opposite Kleber Kaserne still bears the scars of these raids). With the Nazi surrender, the Saarland and Rhineland-Pfalz became occupation zones for French troops, just as they had after World War I. But, although the French troops in Kaiserslautern administered the region, the US Army controlled the large and varied American elements garrisoned around the city.

Though the war was over in this highly agricultural area of Germany, there were food shortages because of price controls, driving many urban dwellers to grow their own while others made weekend treks to the countryside to barter for food. The situation

lasted until 1948 when the German government made major fiscal reforms. A new currency, the *deutsche marks* (DM), replaced the old *reichs marks*, and at the same time, price controls were effectively eliminated. The result of these highly complicated maneuvers was a revitalization of the West German economy.

As Cold War tensions increased and the Korean War began, in 1951 the French and Americans agreed to a reciprocal agreement for the expansion of American installations in the greater Kaiserslautern area. Part of this agreement called for the construction of two air bases approximately seven miles west of Kaiserslautern in the area of Ramstein-Landstuhl. The bases were to be designed by French engineers, built by Germans, and operated by Americans.

The area was no stranger to military aircraft activity. The *autobahn* between Ramstein-Landstuhl had been used by the *Luftwaffe* during the last part of the war, and the *autobahn* was also used as an airstrip by the advancing US Army Air Forces during the final months of the conflict. Soon after the war the center median of the *autobahn*

was removed to it could be used by larger Allied aircraft for emergency landings.

Thus, the building of a major airfield came as no great shock to the local inhabitants. Still, when construction of the 3,000-acre base began in April 1951, it brought a considerable change to the local community. Given the losses to the population of able-bodied men in the war, the German building firms that were contracted to build the airfield had to bring in young men as construction workers from all over Eastern Europe to work on the bases. Local German historians note that pubs soon sprang up around the workers' housing, and locals of both sexes began to mingle with the workers in these establishments. At the same time, Americans' families began to arrive, and many young German girls were hired as baby sitters, bringing an influx of females. As all the groups began to mingle at the pubs and dances, this same historian notes that fights often broke out between the three groups, but that in other ways nature took its course and "friendships developed that ended in marriage.

The German firms completed construction quickly, and the US Air Force opened the first of the two installations in 1952. About a year later, 1 June 1953,

Ramstein Exempt Air Force Installation, separated from Landstuhl by a central dividing road (today's Kisling Memorial Drive) opened to the north. The two bases had an unorthodox arrangement. Landstuhl AB contained the control tower, flight line, and aircraft hangars, while Ramstein housed the headquarters, administration and support facilities.

For a short time after the war the American military had a "no fraternization" policy with respect to German nationals, but this quickly fell by the wayside and the American military personnel and the local German nationals generally mingled quite well. Today older Germans look back on the Fifties and Sixties as the "Golden Years" of German-American friendship in the region. The dollar- *deutsche mark* exchange rate was quite favorable to the Americans, and they responded with buying habits that brought prosperity to local merchants. In May German-American "friendship weeks" were held when German nationals were invited to American bases to look at American equipment, watch such events as paratroop drops, and eat American food, especially the wildly popular American ice cream. Americans responded by joining many local clubs, participating in many local events such as the Ramstein *Fasching*

(carnival) Parade. Local newspapers noted that “a piece of America has come to the Palatine” and that “the American is no longer gazed at like a strange

animal...cowboy, gangster, or rich uncle.” Germans also joined their American friends at clubs both on and off base, and when the

The Arrival of MAC and USAFE Headquarters

On 1 May 1970, under the peacetime aerial port development program, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) began Phase I of its Dover Air Force Base, Delaware to Ramstein cargo channel operations. During the late fall of 1971, the Military Airlift Command (MAC) established the 608th Military Airlift Group at Ramstein which served as a supplementary hub to Rhein-Main for C-141 and C-5 traffic transiting through Europe.

In November 1972, Headquarters, Seventeenth Air Force, returned to Sembach AB to make room for the transfer of

Headquarters United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) from Lindsey Air Station at Wiesbaden. The USAFE commander's flag officially transferred to Ramstein on 14 March 1973. NATO subsequently established Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Central Europe at Ramstein on 28 June 1974. The new organizations brought with them the requirements for large amounts of construction of the various headquarters buildings and Ramstein flight line facilities that continued throughout the 1970s. One of the most important, the new USAFE underground Operations Support Center at Ramstein, opened on 26 April 1979.

Establishment of the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC)

The USAFE commander's flag officially transferred to Ramstein on 14 March 1973. NATO subsequently established Headquarters Allied Air Forces, Central Europe at Ramstein on 28 June 1974. Construction of the various headquarters buildings and Ramstein flight line facilities continued throughout the 1970s. On 26 April 1979, USAFE opened its new underground Operations Support Center at Ramstein.

As a result of the USAFE relocation, Ramstein entered a period of expansion, which resulted in some overlap of responsibilities between the USAF and US Army in the area.

Although the 86 Fighter-Bomber Wing had taken up residence at Landstuhl/Ramstein in 1953, the US Army continued to act as the central controlling authority for the growing Kaiserslautern Military Community. As the Air Force presence expanded, this became untenable and on 30 June 1975, the Air Force and Army signed CREEK SWAP, a memorandum of agreement in which Army units based in the Kaiserslautern area transferred to Wiesbaden and Mainz with a

reciprocal move of Air Force units to Ramstein. This resulted in the establishment of the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC), which had the largest concentration of Americans outside the United States. With the Air Force now making up the majority of the American personnel stationed in the KMC, in October 1976 the Army turned community oversight responsibilities over to an Air Force officer working at Kapaun Air Station, who became the KMC Coordinator. Aligned under the 86 TFW commander, the KMC Coordinator served as the focal point for civilian community concerns, maintained liaison with the Army units remaining in the area and insured proper operation of the community's support structure. The Kaiserslautern Coordinator became a key position not found in other tactical fighter wings. This individual, working closely with the wing commander, coordinated activities with other Kaiserslautern-area installations.

On 1 Oct 1976, the 86 Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) became the host unit for the KMC and the 86 TFW commander became the KMC commander. On 5 August 1978 the 86 TFW converted the title of the KMC

Coordinator's position to the Deputy Commander, Kaiserslautern (KCD). The change in the designation of the position reflected the incumbent's increased authority to administer the KMC as a direct representative of the KMC commander. On 1 July 1979, after long negotiations with the Army unit in the area, the 21st Support Command, the Army commander dropped his objections to the establishment of an Air Force-controlled military police organization in the KMC, and joint Air Force security police-- Army military police activities started. Between 1 October 1976 and 14 June 1985, the population of the KMC had grown to 70,000.

On 15 April 1983 the 86 TFW again restructured the KCD by "dual-hatting" the position with the 86 Combat Support Group commander in an attempt for more effective interaction with local German and US Army authorities. But the responsibilities for the KMC grew, and the increasing requirements for support from Ramstein, the Air Force activated the 316 Air Division (AD) and the 377th Combat Support Wing (CSW). The 377 CSW controlled base operations, leaving the 86 TFW to concentrate on its operational flying mission. This arrangement remained in place until 14 June 1985 when the 316 Air Division (AD) and

377th Combat Support Wing (CSW) joined the 86 TFW at Ramstein. When the 316 AD activated in June 1985, the Air Division commander became dual-hatted as the KMC commander. Meanwhile, the former-86 TFW KCD position assumed a deputy position under the air division. The 316 AD and 377 CSW took control of all community support responsibilities, allowing the 86 TFW to concentrate fully on its operational role.

On 1 May 1991, the Air Force inactivated the 316 AD and the 377 CSW, leaving the 86 Fighter Wing (FW) as the host unit once again. Under the new objective wing structure, the 86 FW commander took control of the KMC much like the air division commander had previously. Two deputy commanders--one Air Force at Kapaun, the KCD, and one Army, dual-hatted as the 415th Base Support Battalion commander--handled the community's day-to-day activities. In addition to providing support for the largest American community outside the US, the 86 FW and 21st Theater Army Area Command also took care of administrative and logistical support for numerous other US activities scattered throughout the European theater.

In early 1996, the wing closed its KCD position. While the wing commander remained the KMC commander, KMC administrative responsibilities again combined under the commander of the 86 Support Group (SPTG)--a deputy of the 86 SPTG continued to provide KMC oversight from Kapaun for the Kaiserslautern area while an additional deputy provided KMC oversight from Sembach AB. This new organization streamlined the command structure and improved inter-service coordination. It also provided the 86 SPTG commander more authority to administer the KMC.

When Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force closed on 31 July 1996, the 86 AW gained several units within the KMC, i.e., the 886 Communications Squadron, the 86 Materiel Maintenance Squadron and the Polygone Training Range in Bann. The wing also gained a two organizations considered outside of the KMC: the 469th Air Base Group at Rhein-Main AB and the 469th USAF Contingency Hospital in Frankfurt. On 17 September 1998 USAFE, through the US European Command, was granted approval from the Secretary of Defense to open negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany and Flughafen Frankfurt am Main AG for the full return of

Rhein-Main AB. The agreed cost and infrastructure projects would turn Ramstein AB into Europe's main Strategic airlift hub.

On 23 Dec 1999, the Federal Government of Germany, United States Air Forces in Europe, German States of Hessen and Rhineland-Palatinate and Flughafen representatives met at Rhein-Main AB, Germany for the ceremonial signing of the final agreement for the full return of Rhein-Main AB to Frankfurt Flughafen Corporation in 2005. The ceremonial became the catalyst for expansion of the KMC. With Rhein-Main's pending closer of 2005, Ramstein AB began to expand with personal, equipment and facilities to meet new mission tasking as the new Gateway-to-Europe. 2\$ billion were allocated for the new construction at Ramstein to allow it to replace Rhein-Main as the Air Force's "Gateway to Europe." The facilities include a 20,000 square meter headquarters for the AIRNORTH staff and a state of the art Air Freight Terminal with a Mechanized Material Handling System that doubled the amount of freight Ramstein could handle. The most visible piece of the construction is the Kaiserslautern Military Community Center, including almost 70,000 square meters of concession space, four theaters, a 350 room hotel for visitors, and extensive

parking, scheduled to open in early 2007. The consolidated facility will be 844,000 square feet and will include an eight-story, 350-room Visiting Quarters facility. AAFES facilities will include a four-plex movie theater, PowerZone, Outdoor Living, Toyland/Four Seasons, food court, new car sales and other vendors in an American-style mall layout. Services facilities will include a spacious Outdoor Recreation area complete with a two-story climbing wall, the Ramstein Tickets and Tours office, Romano's Macaroni Grill restaurant and a Sports Lounge offering local cuisine. The shopping center will feature some concessionaires available for the first time – stateside and overseas – as well as a large variety of specialty stores. This is the first time that the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and Air Force Services have collocated.

7 Mar 2003 approximately 540 Bundeswehr (German Army) soldiers began providing security for Ramstein AB and the KMC. This support was part of a two-year memorandum of agreement to have them perform gate security.

In 2004/2005, Ramstein Air Base underwent an extensive expansion with a major construction including an all-new airport terminal, among other new facilities,

through the so-called Rhein-Main Transition Program which was initiated in support of the total closure of Rhein-Main Air Base on December 30, 2005 and transferring all its former capacities to Ramstein Air Base (70%) and Spangdahlem Air Base (30%).

While the KMC remains the largest U.S. community overseas at 39,000 people, the defense drawdown continues to shape its future. Due to the departure of other main operating installations, more than 100 geographically separated units receive support from Ramstein.

In 2006, Ramstein Air Base also served as temporary housing for the United States men's national soccer team during the 2006 World Cup. Many of the games were played in Kaiserslautern, and the KMC took an active part in supporting the US team and in the festivities in general. The U.S. national team flew into Ramstein June 15 to prepare for their match with eventual World Cup winter Italy two days later, on June 17. On the day of the game, the Air Force and Army MWR programs joined forces and the KMC hosted the Extreme Summer World Cup Fan Fest, held at Pulaski Park on Saturday. The event featured an array of live musical acts, games, a human foosball table and a 400 square-foot Jumbotron that showed the U.S.A. vs. Italy contest. Comedians Drew

Carey and Greg Proops showed up to help entertain the crowd of more than 3,000 people, well as bands, concessions and childrens' activities.

The KMC regularly meets with the Host Nation representatives to discuss issues of local interest and concern. On 10 July 2006, for example, Kaiserslautern Military Community and 86 Airlift Wing commander Colonel (subsequently Brigadier General) Richard Johnston met with Union Community Ramstein-Miesenbach on Ramstein Air Base to discuss construction projects, the economic impact and aircraft noise. Thirty mayors and council members from the Ramstein-Miesenbach area attended the meeting to voice their concerns and ask questions about Ramstein issues, as well as to take a base tour where leadership highlighted the base's mission and new construction projects. Colonel Johnston opened by saying, "I understand the challenges you have living next to a large air base, and I am here to provide you with information that you can take back to your constituents to explain the steps the base takes to be a good neighbor." The Ramstein leadership then responded to questions from Union Community.

On Christmas morning 2006 the 86 AW and 172 AW (Mississippi

ANG) conducted Ramstein's first "real world" Category II ILS approach. REACH 210, a C-17 flown by a crew of the 172nd Airlift Wing flying became the first crew to take advantage of Ramstein's new capability when they arrived Christmas morning after departing Balad Air Base, Iraq with one urgent and six priority patients plus another seven routine patients. As the crew approached Ramstein they found the reported ceiling to be at 100' and requested the Cat II ILS to runway 26. The approach, landing, and taxi to parking were uneventful and all the patients are recovering at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center except for those who required urgent care; they were moved on to Brooks Army Medical Center three days after being declared Cat II and Cat III capable, the capability of the DoD's most capable airfield paid dividends.

In 2009, after a good deal of discussion, the base was once again brought under the control of the 85th AW. In the ensuing years Base Engineers spent a good deal of energy on Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization projects in order to maintain the aging infrastructure on Ramstein. Maintenance projects included expansion of the Commissary; modifications to the Airman Resiliency Center and German CPO Building; renovations to the Ramstein

Bowling Center; renovations to the North Side Fitness Center; installation of underground conduits; manhole replacements; roof repairs; and Air Conditioning systems repairs. Another extensive project involved the multi-funded Officers Club renovation. The latter project was undertaken utilizing \$3,288.00 in non appropriated funds and \$4,098,200.00 in appropriated funds.

Other construction work included modifications to both the East and West Gates. Work included the addition of Canopies as well as enhanced security measures. While the Canopy work was completed in 2009, security modifications were not completed until FY 2012. Work was also performed on street and parking lot lighting throughout the base. Finally,

several traffic circles were repaired or modified, and sidewalks were repaired or new sections constructed.

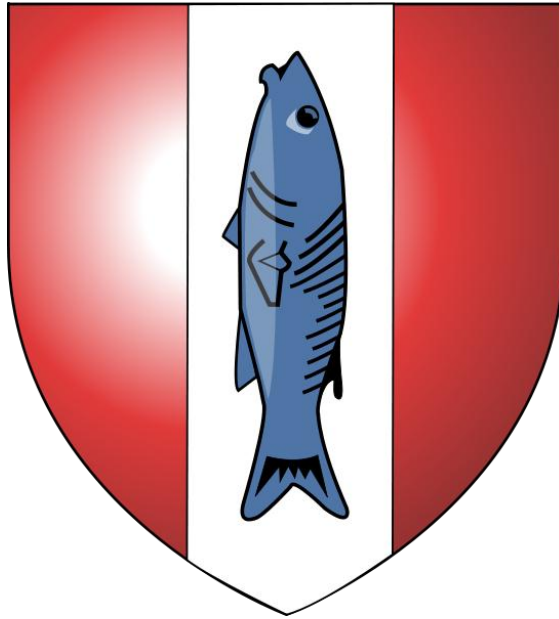
The 86AW assumed stewardship for Officer and Enlisted and Unaccompanied Housing on Ramstein and Vogelweh. When the 86 AW assumed responsibilities for the Housing it inherited a number of an ongoing construction program of 833 new homes and the renovation of 55 additional homes at a cost of approximately \$343M. By the end of 2010 the number of completed townhouses stood at 665. At the same time Engineers developed a General Officers Master Plan to refurbish or otherwise upgrade those quarters. Dormitories were impacted as well as 215 total rooms in buildings 2413, 2414, and 2773 were renovated.

The History of the Kaiserslautern Region

Kaiserslautern's history began around 800 BC with Celtic settlements along the banks of the Lauter River, the main waterway of the region. The Romans occupied the area in 225 BC and established a more permanent settlement, but with the decline of the Roman Empire and the Romans withdrawal to Italy, the settlement was taken over by a Germanic tribe known as the Franconians in the 6 century AD. There they built a court for their ruler in the part of the settlement, which is still known today as *Alten Hof* (old court).

The Frankish monarch King Dagobert built Kaiserslautern's first castle in the Erfenbach-Siegelbach area in 622 AD. In 985, Emperor Otto III of Germany founded

the first village where the Lauter made a section of Kaiserslautern an island. The village earned its name of Kaiserslautern (Kaiser's Town) because it was the favorite hunting retreat of *Kaiser* (Emperor) Frederick Barbarossa, who ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1155 to 1190. Barbarossa constructed his castle in Kaiserslautern between 1152 and 1160, and he also built another one on the Nanstein cliffs, near Landstuhl, to protect Kaiserslautern's western approaches. The Lauter River was an excellent source for fish, reportedly Frederick's favorite dish, and an open-mouthed carp in the centerpiece the city of Kaiserslautern's red and white coat of arms.



Coat of Arms

Kaiserslautern continued to flourish after the death of Frederick Barbarossa in 1190. In 1250, ground was broken for the *Stiftskirche* (steeped church), and in 1276 Emperor Rudolf von Habsburg gave the town its charter. By 1350, construction of the *Stiftskirche* was completed, along with St Martin's Kirche, an abbey erected for a local order of monks. In the rear courtyard of St Martin's a section of the original city wall still stands today.

The Holy Roman Empire, of which Kaiserslautern was a part, controlled an area that stretched from the North Sea to Sicily, and the roads in the Kaiserslautern region became one of the great east-west passageways between France and the Rhine Valley. One of the Empire's great roads

extended from Paris to Saarbrücken through Metz, and then split near Homburg. One route went along the southern edge of a large swamp to Landstuhl and Kaiserslautern and on through the deep valley of Enkenbach to Alsenborn and Worms. The other branch snaked along the northern border of the swamp through Miesau, Ramstein, Otterberg, Langmeil, and through the valley east to the Rhine. A pathway of logs built over the swamp between Landstuhl and Ramstein connected these two routes

In 1519 Martin Luther stood Europe on its head when he began the Protestant Reformation, and that same year the German knight Franz von Sickingen became the owner of Landstuhl's Nanstein castle. Here

many of the reformers found shelter, and a retreat was offered to Luther. Sickingen tried to overthrow the Catholic with the help of the towns and peasantry. He attacked the Catholic stronghold of Trier, but was forced out and retreated to and marched against that city. Trier was loyal to the archbishop and the landgrave of Hesse and Louis V, count palatine of the Rhine, hastened to his assistance. Sickingen, without the help he needed, was compelled to fall back on his castle of Nanstein in Landstuhl. In the spring of 1523 he responded to censure by the Catholic leaders by sacking Kaiserslautern. The rulers of the cities in the region, especially Trier, Hesse and the Palatinate, marched on Landstuhl. Sickingen refused to negotiate, and his enemies laid siege to the castle and destroyed the walls with a newly developed weapon, the siege cannon. Sickingen died shortly after surrendering, and his allies, the Protestant nobility, were conquered by the Catholic princes.

With the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618, the religious wars brought Kaiserslautern turmoil and destruction. In 1621, the city fell to the Catholic Spanish who ruthlessly controlled it until 1632 when the Protestant Swedish army swept through the area. But there was no peace for the city, and three years later, in 1635, Croatian

troops belonging to the Austrian army plundered the city and reportedly killed 3,000 of its 3,200 inhabitants were put to the sword. The neighboring city of Landstuhl was saved from a similar fate by surrendering.

Despite the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 that ended the Thirty Years Wars, the ruler of the region, the Elector of the Pfalz, had difficulties keeping order in the area. As a result, he ordered all the castles in the area, including Nanstein, destroyed. The area was now relatively defenseless, and its close proximity to France resulted in repeated French incursions and occupations of the Saarland and Rhineland-Pfalz palatinates. In 1713, French soldiers destroyed Barbarossa's castle and the Kaiserslautern's city wall towers, and in 1793 French Revolutionary troops took over the area. It remained under French administration until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. At that time, Kaiserslautern and the Rhineland-Pfalz became a province of Bavaria until the end of World War I.

After Germany's defeat in World War I, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles resulted in French troops once again occupying the region for several years. The Germany economy, exhausted after four years of war and hamstrung by the peace of Versailles,

slowly recovered but with the onset of the depression of the 1930s, the German people faced runaway inflation and the highest unemployment rate in the world. As the rulers of the new German Weimar Republic disintegrated under the pressure of a ravaged economy, a small group of radicals, led by Adolf Hitler, a former corporal who had served in the German Army during the war, began to assert themselves. They formed the Nationalist Socialist Party, better known as the Nazis, and promised to break the shackles of Versailles and restore Germany to its rightful place as the leading power in Europe. By 1932, the Nazi party had become the strongest in Germany, and on 30 January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor.

Hitler quickly solidified his power base through the Enabling Act, which essentially allowed the chancellor and his

cabinet to enact legislation without the Reichstag, including changes to the constitution. The Enabling Act allowed the Nazis to gain complete political power without the need of the support of a majority in the *Reichstag* and without the need to bargain with their coalition partners. Hitler soon outlawed all political parties except the Nazis, and then proclaimed himself the absolute ruler and *Fuhrer* of Germany. With broad popular support he discarded the Treaty of Versailles, rebuilt Germany's armed forces, and put the German people to work in the factories and fields. He also began to try to expand Germany's borders, first by moving into the Rhineland and Austria, then – with the acquiescence of the Western powers – into Czechoslovakia. Emboldened by these successes, he invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, which led to World War II.

USAF 60 Years in the Rhineland-Palatinate
By Dr. Silvano A. Wueschner
Historian 86th Airlift Wing

If there is one question I have been consistently asked in the past six months, it is, “Why did the Air Force choose Ramstein as a location for a base? To answer that question requires that one frame the response in the context of the cold war. As the wartime cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union ended and tensions between the two countries mounted, the United States came to see Soviet expansionism as a threat to its own interests and began shaping a new policy of containment, a policy that crystallized in 1947 when suspected Soviet-backed Communist guerrillas launched a civil war against the Greek government. Soviet influence in Greece threatened U.S. interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, especially Turkey and Iran. American reaction resulted in the Truman Doctrine, which called for large-scale military and economic assistance in order to prevent communism from taking hold in Greece and Turkey and thereby lessen the threat to the entire Middle East. The congressional appropriation, which followed, reversed the postwar trend toward sharp cuts in foreign spending and marked a new level of commitment to the Cold War.

President Truman also turned to the National Security Council (NSC) to devise a new diplomatic and military blueprint. The result was NSC-68, a report which recommended an increase in U.S. conventional forces. In the ensuing buildup of forces, the number of U.S. Air Force combat wings increased from 48 in 1950 to 95 by June 1952. The increase in air assets and personnel required additional facilities to house them. More importantly, planners began to reassess how best to deploy their aircraft and associated facilities. That rethinking led to the decision to build six new bases in Rhineland-Pfalz, which at the time had two existing military airstrips, one at Pferdsfeld and the other at Baumholder. Pferdsfeld had been built by the German Luftwaffe in 1938. In the 1950s it was periodically used by the U.S. Air Force to conduct exercises. From 1961 until 1997 it served as a German Luftwaffe base once again. The airfield at Baumholder, built in the early 1940s, came under U.S. Army control in 1951 and was used exclusively by U.S. Army air assets.

There was also an auxiliary Luftwaffe landing strip on a portion of the old autobahn between Landstuhl and Ramstein. It was here that two adjoining bases, Landstuhl AB and Ramstein AB were to be located. From a strategic perspective, the decision to construct six bases on the west side of the Rhine made sense since it placed them behind a natural barrier, and in the majority of cases surrounded by protective topography. It also placed them in a straight line approach to the Fulda Gap, from where the Soviet attack on the bases in the Rhein-Main area was expected to begin. The Tactical Air assets based at these six bases could be used in an offensive or defensive capacity to counter the Soviet advance; or they could be employed to provide close air support for army infantry units meeting the Soviet advance head on. Evidence of planning for the latter contingency was seen on 11 February 1952 when the 86th FBW, based at Neubieberg, furnished four F-84-E Thunderjets for a combined infantry-artillery training exercise with the 2nd Armored Division at Baumholder. The bottom line for military planners was that these bases would be better protected and in closer proximity to the forward edge of the battle area and easier to integrate into joint operations. At the time these bases were situated in an area of stability near an area of potential instability, much in the same way that Ramstein AB today operates from an area of stability as it carries out its missions in Southwest Asia, the Mid-East, and Africa regions.

From 1952 history

The real estate for Landstuhl Air Base was acquired through three (3) separate land requisitions. The first and second portions were directly acquired by the French on 1 April 1951 and 1 October 1951. The final portion of the real estate was requested by the USAF- through the appropriate French agencies and acquired on 27 May 1952.

The French phase of Construction was begun in April 1951. This phase consists of facilities that were funded by and constructed under the supervision of the French. Some of the facilities included in the - phase are the following: (1) runway, 3000' x 1501, (2) taxiway - 50 f t wide as required, (3) dispersal hardstands 75 each, (4) Alert aprons and . (5) Hangar aprons. Construction of all the above facilities was started on 8 April 1951 and completed by March 1952

Other facilities which were started at an early date by the French

Are: (1) POL storage, begun on 15 Nov 51, (2) Ammunition storage which was started on 3 Mar 52, and (3) the railroad spur which was started on Dec 51. In addition, two 210' x 140' hangars were started in March of 1952 and completed in July 1952

The majority of the other facilities which were constructed at Landstuhl were funded by the U.S. although construction was supervised by the French. Some of the facilities in this phase of construction are: airfield lighting communications building, base operations, control tower, crash and fire building, two (2) 1000 man mess halls, seven (7) 400 man barracks, two (2) BOQ's, three (3) squadron operations and equipment buildings, 60,000 sqft of warehousing, motor vehicle and A.I.O. shops, infirmary, post exchange, auditorium, and the Wing, Air Base Group and M & S Group Headquarters building. Still others are: officers mess, engine test block, aircraft wash rack, paint and dope shop, parachute building, guard house, and firing-in-butt.

One of the biggest problems concerned with the construction of Landstuhl Air Base has been the lack of an adequate supply of electric power. The permanent base supply of approximately 2500 KVA is to be furnished by HQ USAREUR's electric power net program in the French Zone. Original estimates called for completion of this net by 15 October, 1952, however lack of funds and a firm construction program has resulted in moving the estimated completion date back to 15 January 1953. Since the move of an advanced party of the 86th F/B Wing to Landstuhl the base and the contractors have been sharing approximately 315 KVA of electric power. The base A.I.O. made numerous efforts to obtain additional 300 KVA but has been unsuccessful thus far. Supply Division, this headquarters (12th AF) will obtain electric power generators which will supply 850 KVA. These generators should be available by 15 Dec 1952.

A rail spur from the railhead at Einsiedlerhof enters the south east corner of the base- and provides –access to the warehousing area. This facility was constructed by the French using their own funds, started on 23 November 1951 and completed by July 1952. Part of this spur line was being used by the contractors for hauling construction material and before the

Bundesbahn would agree to run their trains over this spur line it was necessary to reconstruct a portion of this track. Several conferences with French authorities resulted in agreement that the work would be accomplished by the French using French construction funds. These repairs should result in making the railroad line usable by 1 November 1952.

Another problem concerned with the construction of the Air Base has been the location of the Schernau Labor Colony. This colony owns a large house and some farm land located in the northeast corner of the base. When the French made the original land requisition, this labor colony was permitted to retain their property and carry on normal operations.

However, since the 86th F/B Wing has moved to Landstuhl it has been determined that the location of this colony offered a definite problem in maintaining security and carrying out normal airfield operations. This headquarters has made several attempts to have this colony relocated, however to date no favorable actions have been completed on this matter.

In the spring of 1952, advance parties of the 86th F/B Wing were moved to Landstuhl Air Base. The movement of the accompanying aircraft necessitated the erection of security fencing around the hardstands parking areas. Projects for this work were prepared by this headquarters and the southwest and northern clusters of hardstands were completely fenced by September 1952. This hardstand fence now provides security additional to that which will be afforded by the base perimeter fence. The movement of this advance party made it necessary to ship approximately thirty five (35) 20' x 80' prefab buildings during April 1952 which were used as temporary billeting, messing, and administrative facilities.

In the spring of 1952 it was originally planned to construct approximately 800 dependent housing units in the Vogelweh area, Kaiserslautern. These units were to be used by personnel of Landstuhl and Sembach Air Bases. Additional requirements Kaiserslautern area and the Landstuhl extension made it necessary to construct approximately 1000 more dependent housing units. The following is the present program for construction of dependent housing facilities.

a) Vogelweh area - 824 units to be used by the Air Force are now being constructed by Rhine Military Post. It is estimated that 124 units will be completed by 15 January 1953, 371 units by 15 February 1953 and the final 329 units by 15 March 1953.

b) Landstuhl Extension - 1096 units will be constructed by Rhine Military Post for Air Force use. Estimated completion date for these facilities 1 June 1953.

Ramstein Air Base Operating Units:

86th Air Base Group.....	5 Apr 52
7030th HQ Support Group; 7030th Support Group; 7030th Air Base Wing;	
7030th Combat Support Wing.....	6 Apr 53
26th Combat Support Group.....	5 Oct 66
86th Combat Support Group.....	31 Jan 73
377th Combat Support Wing.....	14 Jun 85
86th Support Group.....	1 May 91
86th Airlift Wing.....	27 Sep 02
435th Air Base Wing.....	15 Jan 04
86th Airlift Wing.....	16 Jun 05
435 th Air Base Wing.....	20 Dec 07
86th Airlift Wing.....	16 Jul 09